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ABSTRACT

Intended to aid schools in designing a Literacy Profile (defined here as consisting of documented information from a variety of assessments of a student's performance over a range of items defined as the dimensions of language learning), this pamphlet presents an alternative to standard assessment techniques. In the form of data tables the pamphlet provides an extensive list of the key characteristics of a student literacy profile, outlines the dimensions of the development of literacy, furnishes "indicators of progress" to chart literacy development, and presents examples of informal assessment procedures across reading, writing, listening and speaking. The pamphlet stresses that each school should consider the interrelated factors of their curriculum practices, language policy, and assessment procedures as they design a literacy profile. Twenty-three references are attached. (RS)

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LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT: DEVELOPING A LITERACY PROFILE

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
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by Heather Fehring

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An important point to remember
when tackling the major
issues of assessment.



For a long time, teachers and parents have realised the limited nature of many assessment practices now being used in schools.

For example, Amy and Fehart both scored 0/10 in their spelling test (see Fig. 1); but their levels of spelling ability are clearly quite different. On the assessment basis of 0/10, both these children would be in the 'Flat Worm' group. (I used to believe there was nothing lower than this group. However, I have been informed by a Queensland source that there is an 'Underwater' group.)

Do these children need the same teaching and learning strategies?

FIGURE 1

Year 1 Fehart		Year 1 Amy
lam	lamb	bapstn
picted	picked	pict
aple	apple	pl
ceped	kept	kt
famly	family	fambly
kart	cart	ct
nife	knife	nif
botum	bottom	tm
looked	looked	lod
serkes	circus	slot
0/10		0/10

- Just what does Aaron know? (See Fig. 2.)
- What English work has he completed?
- What are Aaron's strengths and weaknesses?

FIGURE 2

Name: Aaron Year 10
Grade: B+

English

Aaron has completed a good year of study.

Teacher:

FIGURE 3

Kellie	C.A. 8 years 1 mth
Spelling Age	10 years
Reading Age	6 years 4 months
Writing Age	8 years

What curriculum will assist Kellie to progress and develop her language abilities? (See Fig. 3.) This particular report reminds us of the virtually meaningless nature of such numbers, a fact we were reminded of over a decade ago by Her Majesty's Inspectors in the Bullock report:

A reading age is obtained by transposing test scores on to a scale expressed in terms of years of development. We consider it in many ways a misleading concept which can obscure more than it reveals. Its use assumes that progress in reading can be equated with certain arbitrary units of time. In other words, learning to read is looked upon as consisting of equal steps which can be placed alongside another scale of equal steps, namely months and years. But there are no grounds whatever for supposing that reading progress is a linear process of this kind, and indeed there is evidence to the contrary. Nor is it reasonable to believe that the difference between reading ages of 6.6 years and 8.6 years is the same as the difference between those of 10.6 and 12.6. Even if these facts are disregarded, the concept of reading age is of limited practical value for teachers. If a statement like 'a reading age of 7.0 years' is to have any real meaning, then the characteristics of '7 year old reading' must be known and defined. This would be difficult to achieve. The average 7 year old reader exists only as a statistical abstraction and unless one can ascribe to reading ages attributes which have real meaning the term is highly misleading. It simply cannot be assumed that children having the same reading age read in the same way, require identical teaching, and will profit from similar books and materials. (Bullock, 1975, p. 33)

In response to the limitations of previous assessment and reporting practices, the 1980s in post-primary schools have been dominated by discussion of issues like descriptive, goal-based or work-based assessment and profile development. For concise summaries of both of these methodologies see Suggett (1985) and Withers (1987).

For the Primary-school community, long term dissatisfaction with Norm Referenced Testing has also been responsible for the search for alternative assessment practices – a search which will consider techniques like Literacy Profiles in the 1990s.

What is a Literacy Profile? And how does a school community go about designing one? At present there exists a wide range of views as to what constitutes a student profile. There is no typical profile model, because different types of profiles are required to meet different needs. However, a practical definition of a Literacy Profile could be as shown in Figure 4 opposite.

What are the Key Characteristics of Student Profiles?

When designing Literacy Profiles, the following key characteristics of general student profile formation need to be kept in mind. Student profiles should:

- provide a basis for continuous assessment;
- document achievements;
- provide information which can be used to monitor student progress;
- cover a wide spectrum of different aspects of educational achievements;

Academic (factual knowledge, intellectual processes) – written expression, knowledge retention, the ability to organise material and select appropriately;

Practical skills/knowledge – the application of knowledge, processes, oral skills, investigative skills, etc;

Social attributes/skills – communication and relationship skills, ability to work in groups, initiative, responsibility, self-reliance and leadership;

Personal resources (attitudes) – motivation, commitment, perseverance, self-confidence, etc;

- attempt to provide the evidence or criteria on which the descriptors/marks/grades/scores are based;
- have the potential to create a more student-centred approach to teaching and learning, encouraging individuals to develop greater self-awareness and knowledge of themselves and their own learning. This needs to be taken into consideration when designing curricula;
- enable greater negotiation between teacher and learner on matters of content, progress and achievement, which should also be taken into account in curriculum design;
- enhance teacher morale and pupil motivation. Clearly stated expected goals can provide incentive to students and curriculum feedback to teachers;
- be – reliable
 - easily gathered
 - relevant
 - easily interpreted;
- cover a wide range of techniques such as:
 - observational records
 - summative and formative assessment techniques
 - checklists
 - learning contracts
 - criterion-referenced techniques
 - self and peer assessment
 - goal-based assessment.

In order to formulate a Literacy Profile, a school community needs to have an understanding of what constitutes literacy and what constitutes progress.

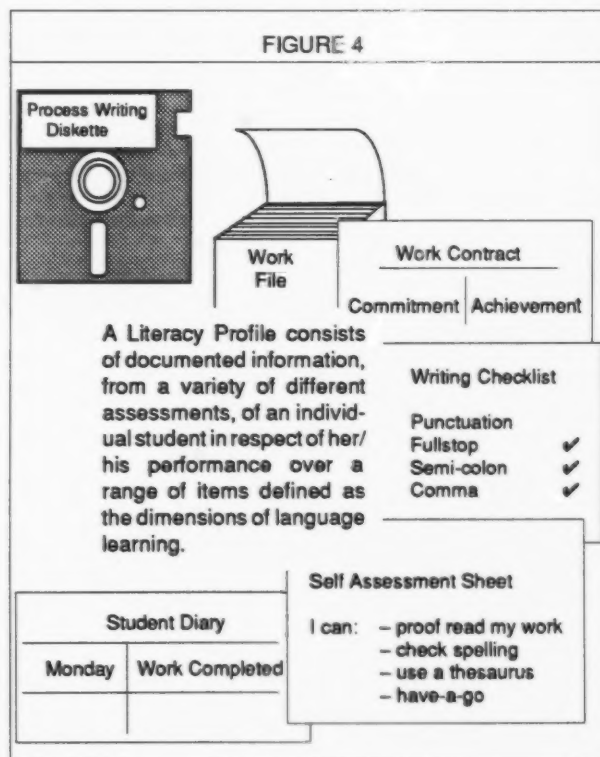


Table 1 outlines the dimensions and examples of descriptors that may be considered to constitute the development of literacy. However, it is important that each school spends some time going through the process of identifying these descriptors in relation to its own school language policy.

TABLE 1: Literacy Development: Dimensions and Descriptors

Dimensions of Literacy	Descriptors
Reading	- Awareness of print - Understanding that print conveys meaning - Directionality – reading left-to-right, top-to-bottom - Concept of a word - Develop an awareness of the different purposes of reading – enjoyment, appreciation of literature, information - Knowledge of the structure of English – grammatical functions, punctuation, prefixes, suffixes, plurals, lexical relationships - Cue usage - Grapho-phonetic knowledge - Visual memory - Meaning relationships - Context usage to gain meaning - Problem-solving strategies – Have-a-go, Look-say-cover-write-check, proofread-check-correct - Resource usage - Library skills - Dictionary – alphabetical order - Thesaurus – synonym knowledge - Word banks - Word prediction process – read, skip, read on, guess, reread - Skim and scanning strategies - Oral/silent reading - Knowledge of the different structures of the different forms (genre) of written language – letters, poems, personal narrative, fiction, factual - Confidence, self esteem, success, interest, desire, enjoyment - Develop ability to interpret, critically evaluate, analyse, summarise, retell, detect bias
Writing	- Handwriting - fluent - legible - Process knowledge – plan, draft, edit, rewrite - Confidence, self esteem, success, interest - Knowledge of syntactic structure and conventions of writing – punctuation, etc. - Knowledge of the different types of writing (genre) – expository text, fiction, poetry, plays, etc. - Positive self esteem, able to handle constructive criticism - Accurately spells many words, self-correction strategies - Ability to use dictionary, thesaurus, word checker, etc – to extend vocabulary and writing knowledge
Listening	- Knowledge of the different purposes of listening – following directions, sharing ideas, conversation, make inferences, information, enjoyment, comprehension - Analyses the spoken word – develops knowledge of word sounds and word relationships, can distinguish between fact and opinion, can detect bias - Concentrates and pays attention to a speaker
Speaking	- Knowledge of the different purposes of speaking – reporting, conversation, sharing ideas, giving information, directions, questioning, clarification of ideas, jokes, stories, interviewing - Knowledge of the language functions – questioning, statements - Has an ever increasing vocabulary - Speaks clearly and concisely - Participates in social interaction confidently – debates, plays, informal classroom chats, etc. - Develop fluent, confident and competent public speaking

Table 2 contains what could loosely be called phases or 'Progress Indicators' applicable to all the dimensions of literacy development

TABLE 2: Key Features of Developmental Progress Indicators in Language Learning

LITERACY PATHWAY				
←-----→				
Preliminary →	Formal Beginning →	Functional →	Independence	
Key Observational Characteristics	• Experimentation	• Approximations and the confidence to try	• Communication to a wide audience	• The ability to analyse, check and correct language structures

	I feide cak too me tortus.	<u>Snow White</u> <u>and the</u> <u>Seven Dwarfs</u> Once upon a time there lived deep in the forest Seven dwarfs.	I SAW THE COMET 76 YEARS AGO. "It was the year 1910 when I saw a white streak in the sky" ... "I with my friends <u>have went</u> to Ayer's Rock to witness the return of <u>Halley's Comet</u>" ... The next time <u>it will be</u> predicted to appear is 28th July 2061. THE END
--	---	--	--

Table 3 contains an example of specific Indicators of Progress for spelling development.

TABLE 3: Indicators of Progress in Spelling

Preliminary	Formal Beginning	Functional	Independence
Shows an awareness that letters of the alphabet represent oral words, e.g., a young writer might tell you that <i>Ab</i> spells <i>Sam</i>	- Rudimentary knowledge of grapho-phonetic relationships, e.g. - kt spells /cat/ - lk spells /like/ - wt spells /went/ - Sight recognition of a bank of correct spellings. - Uses meaning to spell, e.g., <i>keeped</i> spells /kept/.	- Writes coherently, uses grammatical functions (punctuation, etc.), uses resources to assist, develops learning strategies, e.g., - Look-say-cover-write-check 'Have-A-Go'-Check-Correct - Mnemonic Association	- Proof reads, checks and corrects own work. Drafts, edits and rewrites. - Can critically analyse own work; seeks and accepts constructive analysis of work by others.

See the following references for assistance in identifying the indicators of progress in other dimensions of literacy development:

Reading

Infant Education Committee, 1981, *Beginning Reading*. Melbourne, Education Department of Victoria.

Infant Education Committee, 1985, *Reading On*. Melbourne, Education Department of Victoria.

Writing

Parry, J. Hornsby, D., 1985, *Write On: a conference approach to writing*. Sydney, Horwitz Grahame.

Oral Language

Australian Cooperative Assessment Program, 1986, *All Talk*:

oral language curricula. Melbourne, Curriculum Branch, Education Department of Victoria.

Tough, J., 1976, *Listening to Children Talking: a guide to the appraisal of children's use of language*. London, Ward Lock Educational in association with Drake Educational Associates.

Tough J., 1979, *Talk for Teaching and Learning*. London, Ward Lock Educational in association with Drake Educational Associates.

Once the dimensions of literacy have been classified, the relevant descriptors have been listed, and the criteria for the Progress Indicators set, a choice can be made about the assessment procedures which best elicit the information required.

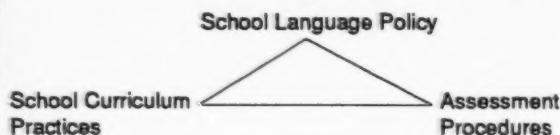
Table 4 contains examples of assessment procedures which illustrate the variety of areas involved in literacy development. Assessment procedures can be chosen because they are applicable to just one descriptor, or to one whole dimension of literacy, or even because they utilise integrated information across dimensions. For example:

- Checklists can be used to itemise separate pieces of information about individual descriptors
 - knowledge of the alphabet
 - punctuation knowledge (full stop, comma, question mark)
- Cloze procedure can be used to make an assessment of reading ability.
- Circle Time or 'Retelling' procedures can tap information across oral work, listening, reading and writing, virtually simultaneously.

TABLE 4: Assessment Techniques for Literacy Profile Development

ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUES	READING	WRITING	SPEAKING	LISTENING
Direct Observation • checklists • anecdotal records • critical incidents • teacher diaries/journals • students/teacher interviews • observational schedules • charts • retelling • circle time • games Work Files • work samples Formal Tests Written Oral • assignment • projects • reports • teacher-made tests – short answer – assignments – projects • commercial tests – multiple choice – NRT • criterion-referenced tests • concept maps • diagnostic tests • running records • miscue analysis Sociometric Measures Attitude Scales • sentence completion • semantic differentials Peer Assessment Parental Assessment Comments Self Assessment • student diaries/journals • questionnaires Practical demonstrations • model making • experiments/laboratory work • drawing/painting/sculpting • films/videos/photography • plays/role-plays • debates/interviews • recitals • simulation exercises • classroom quiz • newspaper/magazine/letter writing Negotiated Contracts – goal based assessment – work required assessment • homework • diaries/journals • learning contracts • reading/writing log books • work task sheets (daily or weekly)	• Barbara Johnson's 'Reading Appraisal Guide' • Cambourne's retelling procedure (comprehension/understanding of story structure) • Scrabble/Boggle/crosswords Formal Tests – PRETOS – Gap – Gapadol – Concepts About Print Test • running records (e.g. ELIC) • miscue analysis (e.g., BRIM/Goodman & Burke, Reading Miscue Inventory) Parental Observations Checklist – reads to us – reads to self – uses dictionary at home – goes to public library • Goal-based reading requirements	• Task Analysis Writing Checklist – ideas – draft – review – revise – redraft – proofread – check and correct – publish • Writing Folders (containing systematically collected samples of writing in different contexts) • Written 'cloze' procedure • Peer Content Checklist – punctuation used – capital letters – spelling • The production of a Class Newsletter • Contract spelling	• Thinking Processes checklist (critical analysis, reflection, idea evaluation...) • Oral reading • Oral 'cloze' procedure • Classroom Interaction Observation schedules • Photo discussions (vocabulary checklist) • Plays	• Retelling • Pass the message games • 'Simon Says' • Debates

To efficiently design a Literacy Profile for your school, you first need to consider the following three interrelated factors:



By setting out what your school is attempting to achieve in the area of literacy development, your Language Policy, Curriculum Practices and Assessment Procedures should form an integrated and interrelated whole. If you change one you must consider the effects on the other two.

For example:

SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B
Policy	• Structured Sequential Language Learning
Curriculum Practice	• 'Quota' Spelling • SRA Reading Scheme
Assessment Procedures – Literacy Profile	• Dictation Test on Friday • Norm Referenced Reading Test
• Whole-language approach	
• Process Writing • Story Box or Story Chest	
• Work Files • Negotiated Contracts • Oral and Written Retelling • Language Checklists	

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